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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 TAIPEI 003562

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SUBJECT: LY ELECTION PREVIEW: A TIGHT RACE IN TAIPEI COUNTY

REF: A. TAIPEI 03340

[B](#). TAIPEI 03414

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#). (C) Summary: Taipei County, with its 28 seats (one more than last election), will be the site of fierce fighting in the election battle for a majority in the Legislative Yuan this December. The Pan-Blue parties have shown remarkable restraint in coordinating their nominations, resulting in a strong slate of candidates in each of Taipei County's three electoral sub-districts. The Pan-Green, by contrast, has nominated aggressively in Taipei County, hoping to get closer to their goal of a legislative majority. With successful peipiao vote-distribution, they might be able to take an extra seat, but it seems more likely that the more disciplined Pan-Blue will take an additional seat or two, shifting the balance in Taipei county from its current 14-13 in favor of Pan-Green to 14-14 or even 13-15. End Summary.

Taipei County: The Big Prize

[2](#). (U) Taipei County (pop. 3,689,664) is a sprawling northern Taiwan district encircling Taipei City. It is the most populous county in Taiwan (its population also significantly exceeds Taipei City's), and has therefore been divided into three sub-districts for the purpose of Legislative Yuan (LY) representation. Taipei County elects 28 legislators, fully one sixth of the total elected from geographical districts, and will be a major focus for every party in the December 11 elections for control of the LY. Taipei County, like many districts in the north, is traditionally considered Pan-Blue territory. KMT presidential candidate Lien Chan won the county by more than six percent in the March election. The Pan-Blue also did well in the 2001 LY elections, in percentage terms, beating the Pan-Green by an 11 point margin. However, because the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) distributed votes much more evenly among its candidates, the Pan-Green managed to take 14 seats to the Pan-Blue's 13. This year both sides aim to gain seats in Taipei County, nominating a total of 19 candidates on the Pan-Green side against 18 from the Pan-Blue. Additionally, 16 independent and minor party candidates have joined the fray.

Party Strategies Reflect Different Strengths

[3](#). (C) These numbers ensure that Taipei County will be hotly contested. Each party has adopted a strategy tailored to its particular strengths and weaknesses. The DPP, for example, enjoys more ideological and organizational cohesion than other parties, so it will rely on a heavily party-based campaign. Candidates in each electoral district are running as a team, always appearing together at rallies and on campaign posters. This helps ensure that all candidates enjoy similar levels of name recognition and popularity. Loyal voters are then encouraged to split their votes among DPP candidates according to a "peipiao" vote distribution scheme (see Reftel A for more on peipiao and why a party would implement it). The DPP's expertise with peipiao was largely responsible for its good performance in Taipei County in the 2001 LY elections.

[4](#). (C) The KMT's strategy will focus on helping candidates cultivate local connections. Nominees are selected for and assigned to distinct "home territories" in which they build their own base of support. This candidate-centered style, which can result in lopsided vote distribution, has been blamed for the KMT's disappointing results in the 2001 elections. However, KMT Taipei County Vice Chairman Chao Jung-sheng said he disagrees with this assessment and asserted that he is confident the KMT's local candidate-based strategy will prove to be successful in December's election. The Pan-Blue's problems in the 2001 election were not fundamentally a result of this campaign style, he said, but rather came about because there were simply too many nominations. He noted that in Taipei County's first sub-district the KMT nominated four candidates in 2001, but only took one seat. This year, they more realistically nominated only two candidates, he said, and both would very likely be elected.

15. (C) Chao explained that the PFP and KMT leadership coordinated their nomination strategy this year. Results of the last two elections were compared to current polls and analyzed to determine a maximum number of nominations in each sub-district. These quotas were then divided between the KMT and the PFP according to the relative strength of each party's candidates. Chao remarked that with a realistic number of nominees, overt peipiao schemes of the sort used by the DPP would be unnecessary. Simply making sure that each candidate was assigned a large enough territory in which to cultivate support and then making the KMT's organizational resources available to all the candidates would "do the work of peipiao for us."

Sub-District One: A Crowded Field on Both Sides

16. (C) Taipei County's First Sub-District is its smallest. Located in the urban southwestern portion of the county, this sub-district is roughly centered along the main transportation links from Taipei City to the western and southern parts of the island. It includes the cities of Panchiao, Shulin and Tucheng and the towns of Sanhsia and Yingko, and is represented by eight LY seats, currently split 5-3 for the Pan-Green. The KMT's two nominees are Lee Chia-chin, an incumbent, and Lin Hung-chih, the current Mayor of Panchiao. As part of their agreement with the KMT, the PFP also nominated two candidates: the incumbent Chou Hsi-wei and a former Panchiao Mayor, Wu Ching-chih. Additionally, the New Party (NP) nominated a former LY member, Lee Sheng-feng, who will officially run under the KMT banner but who is otherwise not connected to the main KMT campaign, and therefore was not counted against their quota in the KMT-PFP nominations agreement. Most observers are dismissive of his chances for election. Vice Chairman Chao said he believes both KMT and both PFP nominees can get elected, but KMT Organization and Development Committee Chairman Liao Fung-te said that the PFP's Wu was not likely to win unless the PFP managed to divert some votes to him from the more popular Chou. PFP County Chairman Wang An-pang, however, complained that the real problem was that the KMT was "unwilling to share its votes," and was instead trying to "steal PFP supporters by playing up the inevitability of a merger" between the two parties.

17. (C) On the Pan-Green side, the DPP nominated three of its incumbents (Lee Wen-chung, Chang Ching-fang, and Wang Shu-hui) as well as Chuang Shuo-han, the former Vice Chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission. The DPP's fourth incumbent did not stand for reelection because he is currently serving a sentence for corruption in a Hualien prison. The TSU nominated its incumbent, Liao Pen-yen, as well as a County Councilmember, Hsiao Kuan-yu. The nomination of six candidates in an eight seat sub-district which has historically favored the other side by a few points has put the Pan-Green candidates in a difficult position. The DPP candidates have agreed that a peipiao scheme will need to be implemented but have not been able to settle on the details, because as it stands the vote might be spread too thinly for all of them to be elected. The DPP's Lee told newspapers that in the end, weaker candidates might need to be sacrificed to save the rest. Wang said she was afraid her votes would be "shared away" from her, because the other candidates assume she can rely on taking one of Taipei County's two seats set aside for women. Although she is the only woman running in sub-district one, the other sub-districts have several women who will likely do well, she said, meaning she cannot take her seat for granted. DPP County Chairman Chang Chi-chang said there were enough votes for all four DPP candidates, and that it was the TSU that had over-nominated. He said that only the DPP newcomer Chuang was in any danger: he would be competing with the TSU incumbent for the last seat.

Sub-District Two: Pan-Green Overnomination?

18. (C) Taipei County's Second Sub-District encompasses the northern coastal portion of the county, including the cities of Sanchung, Hsinchuang and Luchou, the port town of Tamsui, and a number of smaller townships. In 2001, its ten seats split 5-5, but this year a new seat has been added to reflect the area's growing population. The KMT has nominated two of its three incumbents (Tsai Chia-fu and Lee Hsien-jung) as well as Wu Yu-sheng (a former spokesman for Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou) and Chu Chun-hsiao (a former National Assembly member and son of a former Sanchung Mayor). The PFP nominated its two incumbents, Lee Hung-chun and Ko Shu-min. PFP Chairman Wang said he is confident all six Pan-Blue nominees can win election. KMT Vice Chairman Chao said that both PFP seats are safe, and that only Chu is in any danger. He was quick to point out that the reason for Chu's disappointing lack of support is that he joined the campaign late, after having been asked by the party leadership to run. Chao explained that Chu was selected for his connections with Sanchung, where the KMT had no other candidates running. As voters become more familiar with Chu, he said, his level

of support should rise quickly. KMT Committee Chairman Liao had a similar assessment, but added that the party would look for ways to have voters outside Chu's region boost his support.

9. (C) On the Pan-Green side, the DPP nominated six candidates (incumbents Chen Ching-chun and Chen Mao-nan, County Councilmembers Tsai Lai-wang and Lin Shu-fen, former Luchou Mayor Huang Chien-hui, and Wu Ping-jui, the former secretary to Presidential Office SecGen Su Chen-chang). The

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TSU nominated the incumbent Hsu Teng-kung as well as former

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DPP Organizational Affairs Director Liu I-te. DPP Chairman Chang acknowledged that with so many candidates, the Pan-Green is "under a lot of pressure." He explained the DPP's decision to nominate six candidates was justified by the fact that "last time we got enough votes for five, but only nominated four." This time, he said, "because the second district got a new seat, we decided to nominate six." Furthermore, he added, this sub-district was meant to serve as an experiment, to test the theory that nominating more candidates will attract more voters, so that even if all of them do not win, the DPP will be able to take a greater share of the proportional representation seats. With four of the six DPP candidates being newcomers, Chang explained that the DPP's "team campaign" strategy is key to ensuring that all of them get elected. He added that peipiao arrangements had already been made. Voters will likely be asked to give their votes to candidates based on the month of their birth. With each candidate assigned two months, the result should be an equal distribution among all candidates, Chang claimed, ensuring all six get elected.

10. (C) TSU candidate Hsu Teng-kung offered a different assessment of the electoral landscape: "The DPP nominated too many candidates. At best five can win." He partially blamed this overcrowding for his own campaign's problems, but said that the biggest reason for his disappointing performance in recent polls was his late start. Until August, he explained, the TSU had only planned to nominate Liu, but then party founder Lee Teng-hui felt they should be more ambitious and try to gain seats in the LY. "Lee came and personally asked me to run again," he said.

Sub-District Three: Blue Territory

11. (C) Taipei County's Third Sub-District, which includes the more rural south and southeast parts of the county as well as the cities of Chungho, Yungho, Hsintien and Hsichih, has nine seats and has traditionally been the Bluest part of the county. In 2001, the Pan-Blue sent six candidates to the LY against the DPP's three, explained KMT Chairman Chao. However, KMT maverick Chao Yung-ching joined the DPP after getting elected, bringing the current balance to 5-4. This time, the KMT and PFP each nominated three candidates to attempt to reclaim the lost seat. Additionally, the NP has nominated popular former TV talk show host Joanna Lei (Chien) under the KMT banner. KMT Vice Chairman Chao explained that the KMT was using the same regional strategy as in the other sub-districts, nominating candidates from different parts of the sub-district to allow each territory within which to build support. The two incumbents Hung Hsiu-chu and Lo Ming-tsai are from Yonghe and Hsintian, he said, and former National Assembly member Chang Ching-chung is from Chungho. All three, in addition to the NP's Lei, are doing well, Chao said, but Chang's newcomer status made his election less certain. The PFP nominated incumbents Lee Ching-hua, Lin Te-fu and Cheng San-yuan, all three of whom are on track for reelection, according to PFP Chairman Wang as well as recent newspaper polls.

12. (C) The DPP hopes to hold onto its four seats in the third sub-district, said DPP Chairman Chang, so it has nominated three of its incumbents (Chao, Chou Ya-shu, and Chen Chao-lung) as well as County Councilmember Shen Fa-hui. Chang explained that although the DPP's historical share of the vote in sub-district three is only enough to support three candidates, ex-KMT legislator Chao should be able to bring some of his supporters with him. With "a little more effort," he said, and a good peipiao scheme, the DPP should be able to get all four elected. The peipiao arrangements, as in sub-district two, would be based on the month of a voter's birth, with each of the four candidates getting three months. The TSU, which won no seats in 2001, nominated County Councilmember Chen Yong-fu. KMT Committee Chairman Liao said the TSU's nomination of Chen only threatened the reelection of the DPP's Chen, and if the two split the vote, it might make room for the KMT's Chang and throw the sub-district balance to 7-2 in the Pan-Blue's favor. DPP Chairman Chang offered a different assessment, saying that the TSU's Chen was attracting voters from a different base and not "stealing them" from the DPP. The DPP and the TSU,

he noted, had a tacit understanding that they would work together to take a majority in the LY this year.

Independents - Impact Will Be Indirect

13. (C) A total of sixteen independent and minor party candidates registered in Taipei County's three sub-districts. Few observers think any of them have a serious chance at election. According to DPP County Chairman Chang, except for mavericks from the major parties who run on their own nomination (such as ex-KMT now-DPP incumbent Chao Yung-ching), no independent has ever won in Taipei County. That said, there are a few independent candidates who might have a significant impact on the election. In the first sub-district, the infamous leader of the "Tientaomeng" gang, Lo Fu-chu nominated himself for election, but recently said he was dropping out because of his mother's objection to his involvement in politics. A more credible reason offered by KMT Committee Chairman Liao is that Lo wants to help his son, KMT candidate Lo Ming-tsai, win election in the third sub-district. DPP Chairman Chang noted that given "Lo Fu-chu's special connections," Lo Ming-tsai's reelection was all but assured. In the second sub-district, the Pan-Green's over-nomination worries could be further complicated by Nonpartisan Solidarity Union incumbent Cheng Yu-chen. Cheng won election in 2001 as a DPP candidate but was expelled from the party after a scandal over his leaving his wife to live with a TV anchorwoman mistress in Los Angeles. Nobody AIT spoke with gave Cheng any chance of winning reelection in the wake of the scandal, but KMT Vice Chairman Chao said he was hopeful Cheng would skim off some DPP's supporters.

Comment: The Pan-Green's Gamble

14. (C) The Pan-Blue nominations in Taipei County were tightly controlled and coordinated between the two parties, resulting in a strong slate of candidates in each sub-district, nearly all of whom stand a good chance of being elected. The Pan-Blue seems to have learned its lesson from past elections, at least in Taipei County, and might be rewarded for its newfound discipline. The Pan-Green nominations, by contrast, seem aggressive to the point of recklessness. DPP County Chairman Chang justified the strategy by explaining that there is no more territory to be won in southern districts that form the Pan-Green heartland, so the only way to capture a majority in the LY is by aggressively taking seats in the north in traditional Pan-Blue strongholds like Taipei County. The DPP's famous peipiao techniques will be put to the test in trying to assure all six of its nominees (including four newcomers) in sub-district two, for example, win election. The Pan-Green looks more likely than not to lose one seat each in the first and third sub-districts to the more organized Pan-Blue and may well ask one candidate in each district to cease campaigning. In the second district, both sides will likely hold onto their five seats, and it will be a close fight for the new seat added this year. Therefore it seems the best the Pan-Green can hope for (barring any disastrous blunders on the Pan-Blue side before December 11) is to fight off the Pan-Blue in sub-districts one and three and take the new seat in sub-district two, shifting the balance one seat further into their favor at 15-13. Far more likely is a result of 14-14 or 13-15, driving them one or two seats further from their goal of a majority in the LY. The worst case scenario for the Pan-Green would be a loss in both sub-districts one and three and to give up the extra seat in sub-district two to the Pan-Blue, shifting the balance to 12-16. End Comment. PAAL